(ii) Monitoring of the working of consumer disputes redressal agencies through the National Commission;

(iii) States and Union Territories requested to take prompt steps to fill up vacant posts of President/Member in the consumer disputes redressal agencies and maintain a panel of suitable candidates for immediate appointment as President/ Member;

(iv) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 has recently been amended in 2002 mainly to facilitate the quicker disposal of complaints by enhancing the capabilities of the consumer forums, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the procedures and widening the scope of the Act. Among various important amendments made to facilitate quicker disposal of cases include the procedures for selection of the Members of the State Commission and President and Members of the District Forum have been amended for uninterrupted selection of the Members of the State Commission and President and Members of the District Forums so as to fill up vacant post of the State Commission and the District Forums in time. A provision has also been incorporated in the amendment to empower the senior most Member to perform as President in the absence of the regular President of the National Commission, State Commission and the District Forum for smooth and uninterrupted functioning of these forums.

Prices of essential commodities

†958. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of the commodities of daily consumption food materials such as flour, pulses, edible oils, vegetables, milk etc. have been on the constant increase for the past few years;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the extent thereof during the first nine months of the current financial year *vis-a-vis* last year, commodity-wise;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the average increase in the prices is more than those in the developed countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) No, Sir. Prices of most of the commodities of daily consumption remained within reasonable levels, except edible oils, during the last three years. There were marginal variations due to lean supply season, deficient rainfall and hike in transportation cost. Edible oil prices have shown significant increase during the current year due to higher international prices and lower production of oilseeds. The percentage variations in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) of daily consumption items during December and compared to April—start of the current financial year, vis-a-vis last two years, are given below:

Item	Weight	2002-03	2001-02	2000-01
Rice	2.45	3.0	—0.8	—0.7
Wheat	1.38	0.7	2.0	—2.1
Wheat Flour	0.21	0.9	—2.3	—5.0
Gram	0.22	—5.8	18.9	27.8
Arhar	0.13	20.0	1.1	—15.4
Moong	0.11	—0.8	1.6	2.8
Masur	0.04	8.8	5.3	—2.1
Urad	0.10	—6.2	—14.8	22.0
Vanaspati	0.80	10.1	9.5	—9.2
Mustard oil	0.49	40.1	—0.8	—3.3
Groundnut oil	0.17	23.0	6.9	—14.3
Potato	0.26	—22.1	107.1*	—9.2
Onion	0.09	16.0	29.0	96.6
Milk	4.37	0.6	1.8	—3.1

*Arrivals of fresh crop much delayed causing abnormal increase.

(c) and (d) The average increase in the producer prices remained lower or has been negative in the major developed countries. A statement showing the movement of average producer prices, which are closer to wholesale prices, in major developed countries and in India for April—December, 2002 is given in the Statement.

Statement

Movement of Producer Prices (Average) in selected Developed Countries and in India during April-December 2002

Countries	Apr. 02	May, 02	Jun. 02	Jul. 02	Aug. 02	Sep. 02	Oct. 02	Nov. 02	Dec. 02	Average (Apr-Dec.02)
Belgium	1.4	2.4	2.4	—0.2	0.8	0.8	1.5	1.5	1.4	**1.3**
Britain	0.2	0.1	0	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.6	1.2	1.2	**0.5**
Canada	—1.5	—2.6	—1.2	—0.3	0.4	0.5	2.4	2.2	2.8	**0.3**
France	—0.7	—1.5	—1.5	NA	—0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.7	**—0.1**
Germany	—0.5	—1.3	—1.5	—0.8	—0.5	0.3	0.9	1 1	1.1	**—0.1**
Italy	—1.2	—0.9	—0.8	0.1	0.2	0.5	1.1	1.2	1.5	**0.2**
Japan	—0.7	—0.9	—1	—2.2	—1.3	—0.4	—0.3	—0.3	NA	**—0.9**
Netherlands	—0.7	0	—2.2	—0.4	0.2	0.6	2.2	2.1	4.0	**0.6**
Spain	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.6	1.7	2.0	**1.1**
USA	—2	—2.7	—2.1	—1.1	—1.6	—1.9	0.6	0.9	1.2	**—1.0**
Euro Area	—0.7	—0.9	—1.1	0.6	—0.2	0.1	0.9	1.1	1.5	**0.1**
India*	1.5	1.6	2.4	2.8	3.3	3.5	3.1	3.4	3.2	2.8

Source: The Economist, various issues
*Wholesale Price Index

Malpractices in PDS

959. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether lack of supervision affects PDS badly; and